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SUBJECT: DEPUTY SECRETARY STEINBERG'S JUNE 27, 2009

MEETING IN THE NATO-RUSSIA COUNCIL

Classified By: Deputy Secretary Steinberg, Reason 1.4(d)

[1](#)1. (U) June 27, 2009; 1700; Corfu, Greece.

[1](#)2. (U) Participants:

U.S.

Deputy Secretary Steinberg
Ambassador Ivo Daalder, USNATO
A/S Phil Gordon, EUR
DASD Celeste Wallander, OSD
Dr. Liz Sherwood Randall, NSC
Bruce Turner, Director EUR/RPM
Reece Smyth, notetaker

Other NRC Ministers

Albania - Foreign Minister Lulzim Basha
Belgium - Foreign Minister Karel De Gucht
Bulgaria - Foreign Minister Ivailo Kolfen
Canada - Foreign Minister David Emerson
Croatia - Foreign Minister Gordan Jandrokovic
Czech Republic - Foreign Minister Karel Schwarzenberg
Denmark - Foreign Minister Dr. Per Stig Moeller
Estonia - Foreign Minister Urmas Paet
France - Foreign Minister Bernard Kouchner
Germany - Foreign Minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier
Greece - Prime Minister Kostantinos Karamanlis
Hungary - Foreign Minister Kinga Goncz
Iceland - Foreign Minister Ingibjorg Solrun Gisladdottir
Italy - Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi
Latvia - Foreign Minister Maris Riekstins
Lithuania - Foreign Minister Vygaudas Usackas
Luxembourg - Foreign Minister Jean Asselborn
Netherlands - Foreign Minister Maxime Verhagen
Norway - Foreign Minister Jonas Gahrstore
Poland - Foreign Minister Radoslaw Sikorski
Portugal - Foreign Minister Luis Amado

Romania - Foreign Minister Lazar Comanescu
Russia - Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov
Slovak Republic - Foreign Minister Jan Kubis
Slovenia - Foreign Minister Dimitrij Rupel
Spain - Foreign Minister Miguel Angel Moratinos
Turkey - Foreign Minister Ali Babacan
United Kingdom - Foreign Minister David Miliband

¶3. (C) SUMMARY: At the June 27 informal NATO-Russia Council (NRC) meeting in Corfu, Allies and Russia concurred that PermReps should complete work on a road map to reinvigorate NRC cooperation and dialogue; that mil-mil contacts should resume; and that more high-level NRC political engagement in NRC is necessary. FM Lavrov reiterated familiar Russian complaints over NATO enlargement as violating the principle of indivisibility of security and called for this to become a legally binding commitment; reaffirmed that the Russian decision to recognize the Georgian regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia was "immutable;" called for direct NATO-CSTO cooperation; indicated Russia would be willing to restart cooperation on Theater Missile Defense with NATO but only if NATO missile defense plans were not linked to the U.S. Global Missile Defense System; and called for Russian input to NATO's nascent Strategic Concept. The Deputy Secretary noted the need to respect all of the NRC founding principles including transparency, human rights, the right of states to choose their own security arrangements, and territorial integrity, as well as the indivisibility of security. Allies -- most sharply the UK, Canada and Poland -- criticized Russian actions in Georgia, reaffirmed their support for Georgian territorial integrity, and argued that it was in Russia's interest to allow UN and OSCE monitors into Abkhazia and South Ossetia. Many Allies stressed the need to break the impasse on the CFE Treaty. Italian PM Berlusconi spoke out most warmly -- and at the greatest length -- in urging a renewal of the NATO-Russia relationship, arguing that past differences must be put aside in order to avoid a return to the Cold War. All ministers agreed on the need to rebuild trust and confidence in the NRC. END SUMMARY.

SecGen and Allies Constructive

¶4. (C) The SYG opened the June 27 informal NATO-Russia Council (NRC) Ministerial meeting with regret that it had not proved possible to reach an agreement on a paper for restructuring the NRC, while noting areas of shared interest where NATO and Russia should enhance practical cooperation: counter-terrorism, counter-proliferation, Afghanistan, Search and Rescue, and Civil Emergency Responses. He expressed his perception that it would now be possible to resume mil-mil cooperation, beginning with renewed Russian participation in Operation Active Endeavor (OAE) in the Mediterranean Sea. (Comment: The previous day, the Russian Mission to NATO had made clear that Moscow was not yet prepared to agree to participate in OAE.) He noted that while serious differences remained and should not be underestimated -- in areas such as Georgia, NATO enlargement and missile defense -- it was important to take the NRC forward.

¶5. (C) Those Allies that spoke initially amplified the SYG's remarks, largely balancing continuing concern over some Russian actions with a strong call to complete work on the NRC restructuring road map to open up future cooperation in areas of shared interest. Italian PM Berlusconi went the farthest in arguing for "forgetting" recent events in the name of making Russia part of the "new" West and avoiding a return to the Cold War. Greek PM Karamanlis noted that failure to resolve the CFE impasse was also a dividing factor in European security. German FM Steinmeier argued that a number of security challenges cannot be solved against Russia, not to mention without Russia, said it was time to look forward (from Georgia), and called for more efforts, including in the NRC on disarmament. Lithuanian FM Usackas noted there remained serious questions about Russia's fulfillment of international commitments but supported further engagement, even offering to host a meeting of NRC parliamentarians in Vilnius in 2010. Slovenian FM Rupel

countered that no single issue should be allowed to dominate the agenda. Turkish FM Davutoglu called for more parliamentary interactions, reminded Russia that the NRC was founded on values, and urged a resolution of the CFE issue based on the parallel actions package and maintaining the flank provisions. Danish FM Moeller emphasized the need to deepen existing areas of cooperation, including on CFE. French FM Kouchner emphasized the importance of conveying to the public that NATO and Russia can cooperate and noted differences on CFE, enlargement, MD, and Georgia -adding that Russian actions on the latter had seriously hurt confidence and trust. UK, French, Spanish, and Norwegian FMs called for more NRC meetings and especially high-level engagement among NRC Ministers.

But Lavrov Slams NATO on enlargement and Georgia

¶16. (C) Lavrov cited two events as especially damaging to the NATO-Russia relationship: the 2008 NATO Bucharest Summit decision on enlargement that was taken "at the expense of Russian security interests;" and the events of August 2008, when NATO rejected Russia's plea for an emergency NRC session to discuss the situation in Georgia. On the first, Lavrov suggested, if NATO really believes in the indivisibility of security that it be prepared to transform this political commitment into a legal one. He argued that NATO enlargement inevitably led to divisions in Europe. As for Georgia, he accused some Allies of militarizing Georgia through the provision of "offensive" weapons and accused Saakashvili of exploiting the prospect of eventual NATO membership and eventual defense guarantees to unleash aggression against its breakaway regions. He claimed that Georgia was still receiving weapons and that exercises on Georgian territory were directed against the north, noted the recent Russian proposals for continuing an OSCE mission in Georgia, and urged others to focus on practical action to reduce tensions rather than territorial integrity. He expressed "regret" at the end of UNOMIG and OSCE missions (COMMENT: The irony did not escape Ministers) and he said that the Russian position on South Ossetia and Abkhazia was "irreversible."

Lavrov: Need to Restore Trust

¶17. He agreed that NATO and Russia needed to restore trust, but this could only occur if Russia interacted with NATO on a truly equal footing. He called for progress in defining the meaning of "substantial numbers" of forces in the context of basing and in completing the process of adapting the CFE Treaty by building on the recent German-hosted seminar, involving the JCG more actively in ongoing discussions, and possibly even involving the NRC and armaments directors.

¶18. (C) Lavrov said that Russia had no intention of deploying increased military forces on the borders of its neighbors, adding that Moscow was actually withdrawing forces from the Kaliningrad district. Citing Russian cooperative efforts on Afghanistan with respect to non-lethal transit and counternarcotics, he said it was time for NATO to cooperate actively with the CSTO rather than ignore it as a way to build confidence and trust, particularly on counter-narcotics. He welcomed NRC theater missile defense (TMD) cooperation, but stated categorically that no TMD cooperation was possible if the NATO Active Layered Theatre Ballistic Missile Defense (ALTBMD) program was linked with the planned U.S. missile defense sites in Poland and the Czech Republic. He said that the transformation of NATO in responding to new threats might run counter to international law and damage Russian interests. In this regard, he said that Russia should be consulted as NATO revises its Strategic Concept. He supported resumption of NATO-Russia mil-to-mil cooperation. In conclusion, he returned to the theme of the need for a European security treaty.

U.S. and UK Respond

¶19. (C) The Deputy Secretary stressed the NRC's potentially important role. At the same time, he said that for this potential to be realized all NRC founding principles would

have to be reaffirmed, including transparency, human rights, the sovereign right of states to choose their own security arrangements, and territorial integrity. Russia could not emphasize the indivisibility of security at the expense of these other fundamental principles. The Deputy Secretary said that the NATO-Russia relationship had progressed in the last decade, adding that further progress was possible but that it would have to be adapted for the security challenges of the new century. He called for resolving the CFE impasse.

He also agreed that the NRC should be an all-weather forum. He strongly emphasized that the U.S. would not sacrifice its core principles with respect to Georgia; at the same time, he said that it was important not to let disagreements on specific issues imperil cooperation in areas of common interest. He agreed with Lavrov that the revision of NATO's Strategic Concept should be transparent.

¶10. (C) UK FM Miliband said that actions needed to correspond with words and that NATO-Russia cooperation should not be based on zero-sum thinking. In a clear rebuttal to Berlusconi, Miliband also said that while one should learn from history, one must not forget it. He suggested that just as Russia in Helsinki had expressed its discomfort with Europe's current security architecture, many Allies felt discomfort with respect to Russia's commitment to the principle of preserving territorial integrity. He repeated the SYG's call for higher-level political engagement on the part of Allies and Russia alike in order for the NRC to begin to realize its potential. Canada stressed the negative impact of Russian actions in Georgia and its vetoes on the OSCE and UNOMIG missions. Polish FM Sikorski sought to reassure Russia on Missile Defense by promising full transparency of any deployments and activities there. He also warned that a second August crisis would be regarded as an "unforgivable provocation."

The Secretary General Concludes

¶11. (C) In closing the meeting, the SYG summed up that the NRC had resumed and restarted its political dialogue; that NRC members would continue to work on an agreed document for taking the NRC forward; and that mil-mil contacts should proceed. He noted that Russia had been invited to the July 7 kick-off seminar on the Strategic Concept (Note: Russia was not singled out for special attention; NATO has invited all its partners to this event). He stressed the importance of active, high-level political engagement to make the NRC a success.

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